A Literary Revolution:

How Afro-American Writing Impacted the Civil Rights Movement

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Junior Division

Paper

Process Paper: 498 words

Historical Paper: 2366 words

Process Paper:

This year, inspiration for my paper stemmed from something I love to do: read. Books have always been fascinating to me, a whirlwind that takes one out of their life and into another, and in my project, I wanted to do something that commemorated that. Specifically, my idea came from a book I read last year, titled *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry,* by Mildred Taylor. Reading her novel put into perspective what an impact literature can have, so I decided to focus on literature and, specifically, the effect it had on the Civil Rights Movement.

This project was so exciting to me - discovering a new take on the history I knew well and exploring a new side and perspective to the curriculum often taught in schools. As I researched, I discovered how truly revolutionary this idea was - using literature as a political weapon, a tool to gain rights. My paper discusses the impact of this literary reform on not only past America, but also its influence on modern day youth. It considers the cruciality of Afro-American literature to fuel one of the most well-known nonviolent movements and develop a fairer nation, one where minorities are heard and represented.

To begin my research process, I consulted local librarians and compiled a list of texts and authors to read that spanned across all genres: poetry, fiction, autobiographies, and more, by renowned authors like Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, and James Baldwin. The list also included contemporary authors like Linda Williams Jackson and Toni Morrison. Then I began to read, annotate, and analyze these works, beginning with Dorothy Height's *Open Wide the Freedom Gates*. Weeks were spent on the reading process, and during that time, I was putting together another list of related topics to look into. Once the reading was complete, I worked

through articles, interviews, and more books, gathering enough information to create a thesis. I used this thesis and notes I had taken to compose a first draft of my paper. Feedback from my teacher and peer-review sessions helped me improve and edit my writing.

My historical argument is that Afro-American literature influenced a massive revolution that resonated through generations. The authors from this era were essential to the nonviolent movement, as they began a literary revolution to tell their stories of facing injustice and xenophobia, inspiring generations to rise up against oppression and fight for change.

This topic is historically significant because it explores the impact of representative literature. Literature that constitutes for marginalized cultures is so important to have in society. That kind of representation is world-changing, as seen during the Civil Rights Movement. Literature was able to achieve justice, freedom, minority representation, and equal opportunity in schools, colleges, and beyond. It still fosters understanding and slowly builds a bridge of respect between races that were constantly warring against each other. Today, Afro-American literature continues to fight a battle that has not yet been won, and is still relevant in political and cultural scenes across America.

Historical Paper:

INTRODUCTION TO AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

Authors in the late 20th century were essential to the Civil Rights movement because they moved individuals due to their influence through literature, creating a domino effect that swayed the greater minds of today. The effects of these authors carried through generations, leading African-Americans across the United States in a continuation of their forefathers' peaceful revolution. Instead of guns and fists, the Black American community fought with words. The literature from that era fueled the movement, and continues to be essential to the development of fair laws and practices across the globe. The writers in the 1940s to the 1970s were crucial to the peaceful revolt, as they began a literary revolution and used novels to tell their stories, leaving entire generations inspired to fight for change and rights.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

Throughout the late 20th century, the Civil Rights Movement was defined by various displays of injustice and prejudice that consequently began to shape the literature genre called Afro-American, or Black literature. For instance, in 1957, nine African-American students attempted to attend an all-white high school in Arkansas. These students, called the “Little Rock Nine,” were mentored by Daisy Bates. She helped the children through their years at Little Rock Central High School, guiding them through threats, violence, and injustice[1]. In 1962, four years after the first student graduated, Bates released her memoir, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock,* which describes in depth the struggles faced by her and her nine mentees in Little Rock. Praised by Eleanor Roosevelt, the former First Lady noted, “This is a book which I hope will be read by

[1] Bunch, Lonnie. "The Little Rock Nine." National Museum of African American History and Culture, nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/little-rock-nine . Accessed 15 Jan. 2026.

every American. It is simply told and easy to read, but not pleasant" [2], forever documenting Bates' novel as necessary to spread awareness of past bigotry so society can overcome it.

The story of Mack Charles Parker again demonstrates the importance of literature in the current era, especially in the courts. Parker was lynched in 1959 after being accused of raping a white woman. A mob beat, shot and drowned him before he got the chance to attend a trial for his alleged crime[3]. Twenty-six years later, in 1985, Howard Smead released the book *Blood Justice: The Lynching of Mack Charles Parker*, a meticulously researched novel with interviews, unreleased documents from the FBI and Justice Department, and newspaper accounts that tell Parker's story. This is not a poetically written novel, rather a factual manner of truth-telling that the world needed to hear. Smead turned away from prose and thought-provoking writing to present the bare-bones of an unfair case directly.

Many gave the novel the accolade of doing "an excellent job of portraying the turmoil of America during this time period" [4]. It was also instrumental in piecing together the various aspects and perspectives involved in the Parker case. Thanks to "hundreds of pages of interviews conducted by the FBI, along with a book written in the 1980s by Howard Smead, "Blood Justice," the events and the people involved are well-documented"[5]. *Blood Justice*, and novels

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[2] Bates, Daisy, and Eleanor Roosevelt. The Long Shadow of Little Rock. U of Arkansas P, 1962

[3] "Apr. 25, 1959: White Mob Murders Mack Charles Parker in Mississippi." Calendar.Eji.Org, calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/apr/25 . Accessed 19 Feb. 2026.

[4] "Summary of Dr. Smead's Blood Justice." IPL, www.ipl.org/essay/Summary-Of-Dr-Smeads-Blood-Justice-A987DF612EF2B294

[5] Staff Report. "FBI Re-opens Mack Charles Parker Lynching." Picayune Item, 10 May 2009, picayuneitem.com/2009/05/fbi-re-opens-mack-charles-parker-lynching.

like it, keep the truth alive. The revelation of Parker's story was met with overwhelming horror at the crimes committed, and with it, a determination to prevent history from repeating itself.

Furthermore, the legacy of Emmett Till, one of the icons in the movement, still resonates with the modern world today. Emmett Till was similarly lynched and murdered in 1955 for allegedly flirting with a married white woman. After her husband found out, he, alongside other men, had Till killed. It was a highly controversial topic at that time, and to many it remains so, but the incident catalyzed Till posthumously becoming a pivotal figure in the Civil Rights Movement. Thus, many people began to look upon the injustices done to Till and others like him with new eyes, and a flame for justice sparked once more in the minds of literary geniuses, like Gwendolyn Brooks and James Baldwin. These authors turned the crimes committed against Till into plays like Baldwin's "Blues for Mister Charlie, " or poems like Brooks' "The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till," remembering the atrocities that occurred[6]. This type of remembrance is one of the most powerful uses of Afro-American literature. These authors did more than just tell stories, they preserved legacies on the page, ones that would continue to be invaluable to the shaping of the American identity. Today, Till continues to influence American culture through modern literature, such as Linda Jackson's acclaimed novel *Midnight Without a Moon*.

[6] Mambrol, Nasrullah. "Literary Responses to the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Movement." Literariness, 28 Apr. 2025, literariness.org/2025/04/28/literary-responses-to-the-civil-rights-movement-and-black-power-movement/ . Accessed 3 Jan. 2026.

Midnight Without a Moon has received countless praise, referred to as "a powerful story[7]", with a main character who will be "an inspiration to every reader who meets her[8]". Jackson focuses on how Till's murder, and the consequent events, deeply impacted young children[9]. Through her characters, Jackson delves into the negative effects of growing up in a racist and segregated environment. From this, educators everywhere have begun to seriously consider the effects of prejudice on adolescents, and for this reason, some instructors have begun to specifically feature this book in their curricula to assist students in comprehending the effects of xenophobic and racist culture[10]. Novels like this one are crucial to developing the fair America everyone wants to see, and the best way to do that is start with children: the future of this country. Jackson used her authorial platform to reach out to the children, presenting a dark story in a way they can process and understand. In this manner, her writing makes an even bigger difference, because rather than affecting America's present, Jackson is changing its future.

HOW AUTHORS IMPACTED THE MOVEMENT

These novels and their authors inspired variations within literary society, leading to what is known today as Afro-American, or Black literature. This new genre encouraged people to think differently when it came to creative endeavors, and led to the welcoming of new writers and artists on the scene. Soon, those new authors were gaining recognition and fame, and before long they, too, left a lasting legacy and impact on modern American society.

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[7] "Midnight Without a Moon." Kirkus Reviews, 3 Jan. 2017, www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/linda-williams-jackson/midnight-without-a-moon/

[8] "Reviews and Praise." Linda Williams Jackson, lindawilliamsjackson.com/reviews.

[9] Jones, Claire. "An Intersectional Feminist Perspective of Emmett Till in Young Adult Literature." East Tennessee State University, May 2018, dc.etsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4844&context=etd .

[10] Williams, Rashanda. "Civil Rights History Tour in Sixth Grade." Shorecrest, 8 Feb. 2021, www.shorecrest.org/news/2021-02-18/civil-rights-history-tour-in-sixth-grade

Maya Angelou, who taught generations of Black men and women alike to regain their voices and share their stories, serves as just one example. After a tumultuous childhood, she fell into silence, not speaking for years. After this long period, she rebounded to be more resilient and confident than prior years, sharing her personal narrative for readers to identify with in her novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.* Using her words to force readers to confront not just world-wide injustice, but the inequality and discrimination residing in their own stories, she connected with millions of people who saw themselves in both her and her personal narrative. Using words alone, she empowered a whole generation to rise up and fight for change and justice[11].

Another example is James Baldwin, known for breaking the mold. He refused to conform himself to society's ideas of what a "good Negro" consisted of. He wrote about controversial topics with courage, consistently speaking his truth with no mind to the thoughts of others. Passionate and driven, Baldwin had a plethora of ideas that would spark change in society. He fearlessly experimented, visible in the fact that his creative talent spans multiple expressive genres, such as novels, poems, and plays. But all of his works contained one shared aspect: a goal to raise awareness. His variety successfully helped various classes of people nation-wide to realize the injustices being committed against minority cultures, taking one more step toward bringing racial discrimination to a halt[12].

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[11] Dalavai, V. R. "Maya Angelou: From Struggle to Strength – A Voice for Liberation." Granthaalayah Publications and Printers, www.granthaalayahpublication.org/Arts-Journal/ShodhKosh/article/view/1603/1081

[12] "James Baldwin." National Museum of African American History and Culture, nmaahc.si.edu/james-baldwin . Accessed 3 Jan. 2026.

COMMON THEMES IN AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

Similar to Baldwin and Angelou, writers in this genre compose pieces with many overarching themes behind them. Common themes found in those pieces were resilience, empowerment, reflection, advocacy, change, truth, history, suffering, and subversion of stereotypes. Two of the most important, however, were community and tenacity, as written in Dr. Dorothy Height's *Open Wide the Freedom Gates*.

The Civil Rights Movement centered around community: the belief that one never finds themself alone. Despite the struggle African Americans face, no one stands without the loyalty of their fellow people. When society overlooks minorities, support within those communities can fuel a growing revolution, and by the same logic, fuel change. Height promoted community through her novel, stating, "We [white and African-American people] have learned here we can better understand each other when we talk together. We've learned we can work together, and even sit together. We've learned we can eat together. Maybe we can learn to live together and die together[13]." Unless people band together, the realization of advancement remains impossible, and this stretches far beyond racial matters. To truly unite in society, not only Americans, but citizens world-wide, must learn to support one another despite race, religion, or other controversies, because otherwise, growth and change cannot appear in society.

Tenacity and perseverance were another set of virtues necessary in the development and growth of the Civil Rights Movement. The ability to build such an uprising requires the willingness and the drive to work hard. Dorothy Height and the other leaders she worked with still hold renown as models of tenacity and perseverance. They did not back down in the face of danger, nor did they cower from threats. They embraced the risks for the sake of those that came

[13] Height, Dorothy I., and Maya Angelou. Open Wide the Freedom Gates : a Memoir. PublicAffairs, 2003.

after them, and left an impact in the process. Coretta Scott King, a leader in the Civil Rights Movement, comments on Height's authorial legacy of tenacity, saying, "With her clarity of vision, her eloquent voice for justice and human decency and her courageous and determined leadership, Dr. Dorothy Height has been a great inspiration to me[14]."

These themes were the backbone to not just the "literary revolution" but to the Civil Rights Movement itself. Afro-American literature promoted values that provided leaders with the passion and determination to fight for change across America. Furthermore, by using these topics, Afro-American writers inspired the youth of today to seek out change. These writers and those that followed used themes such as these to start new revolutions and fight for not only justice, but also freedom, minority representation, and equal opportunity in schools, colleges, and beyond.

THE LONG LASTING EFFECTS OF LITERATURE

Texts like these that constitute for minority cultures have lasting effects, such as encouraging youth and shedding light upon unknown icons. Afro-American literature, due to the representation it fosters, serves as a fundamental tool in building the ideal culture in America: one that includes everyone, and all feel confident in their dignity and self-worth, no matter their race or gender. Natachi Onwuamaegbu of the Washington Post claims, "Representation in the media means that America can finally see itself in all its multicultural, multiracial, beautiful self. Representation in the media means that America sees more to minorities than stereotypes. Representation can make disadvantaged groups become real people[15]." Depiction of varied cultures allows communities to feel seen, as it allows diversity to be normalized and fosters an

[14] Height, Dorothy I., and Maya Angelou. Open Wide the Freedom Gates : a Memoir. PublicAffairs, 2003.

[15] Onwuamaegbu, Natachi. "The importance of representation." The Stanford Daily, 25 May 2018, stanforddaily.com/2018/05/25/the-importance-of-representation/ . Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

inclusive and caring atmosphere. Additionally, media representation, in literature and beyond, provides children and young adults with the role-models and inspirational figures essential to their mental development. In this way, writers like Toni Morrison have roused a new generation of authors, such as Amanda Gorman.

Gorman, America's youngest Inaugural Poet, took inspiration from Morrison, who showed her to take pride in her race and to find no shame in making her characters "darker" and more similar to herself[16]. In this way, Gorman continued the literary revolution founded by her forebears uniquely, stating proudly in her poem *The Hill We Climb*, "So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left. With every breath from my bronze-pounded chest, we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one. … In every known nook of our nation, in every corner called our country, our people, diverse and beautiful, will emerge, battered and beautiful[17]." Gorman also found self-confidence through Maya Angelou sharing her struggle with a speech impediment. Through Angelou's honesty, Gorman found someone to relate to: a successful poet and Black woman she identified with. Her story testifies to the fact that sharing experiences does more than just build culture, it builds confidence in youth, inspiring them to continue the literary revolution and make a difference[18].

Literature additionally brings representation to unsung heroes like Dorothy Height. Height accomplished incredible things in her lifetime, fostering interracial dialogue and serving

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[16] Brisco, Elise. "Amanda Gorman tells Oprah about her connection to Maya Angelou: 'It was an amazing discovery.'" USA Today, 6 Mar. 2021, www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/celebrities/2021/03/26/amanda-gorman-oprah-interview-cites-angelou-morrison-inspiration/6998957002/ Accessed 3 Feb. 2026.

[17] The Hill Staff. "READ: Transcript of Amanda Gorman's Inaugural Poem." The Hill, 20 Jan. 2021, thehill.com/homenews/news/535052-read-transcript-of-amanda-gormans-inaugural-poem/

[18] Brisco, Elise. "Amanda Gorman tells Oprah about her connection to Maya Angelou: 'It was an amazing discovery.'" USA Today, 6 Mar. 2021, www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/celebrities/2021/03/26/amanda-gorman-oprah-interview-cites-angelou-morrison-inspiration/6998957002/ Accessed 3 Feb. 2026.

as the sole female advisor to many prominent leaders like Barack Obama and John Lewis. Despite her astounding achievements, she remains an unknown entity to most, especially compared to icons like Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, who hold a place as prominent figures well discussed in academics. Joel Brokaw, Height's agent, remarked on her book, saying, “I realized when I first started working with Dr. Height that her important contributions to her country were largely unknown to the vast majority … I thought a book would be the most powerful vehicle to help fill in these blank pages in our history books.[19]” Height’s novel embodies her story on the page, carrying on her life mission of "working to eliminate poverty, racism, and sexism.[20]” Her writing impacts those of all genders and races, inspiring citizens nationwide to rise up for what is right.

CONCLUSION

The Afro-American literary revolution centered not only around writing, but also peace. These novels and writings, though seemingly aggressive and violent, share the authors’ views and experiences in a peaceful method conducive to the development and growth of the authors’ vision: a fair world. Afro-American writers started a coup through their words, exposing truth and sharing experiences, simultaneously constructing a new, just, narrative for future Black Americans. These texts fueled a revolution that would reform the minds of an entire nation, bringing two disparate peoples and cultures together and creating the foundation for equitable modern day America. Today, these writings are still relevant, making a difference one word at a time in classrooms, government, and the daily lives of Americans by touching contemporary

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[19] Legard, Lauren. "Civil Rights Legend Tells Her Story." Roll Call, 23 Feb. 2004, rollcall.com/2004/02/23/civil-rights-legend-tells-her-story/ . Accessed 10 Jan. 2026.

[20]Legard, Lauren. "Civil Rights Legend Tells Her Story." Roll Call, 23 Feb. 2004, rollcall.com/2004/02/23/civil-rights-legend-tells-her-story/ . Accessed 10 Jan. 2026.

authors nationwide. Through their literary revolution and the reformation that followed, writers during the Civil Rights Movement opened doors for the authors of Afro-American literature that followed, paving a path of truth and change for generations to come.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Angelou, Maya. *And Still I Rise*. Random House, 1978.

This collection of poems by Maya Angelou offered insight into Angelou's childhood and early years, and on top of it being an interesting read, it provided me with a lot of common themes in Afro-American poetry. It was interesting to compare Angelou's use of those themes to other poets' pieces.

Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time*. Vintage International, 2016.

This book is a combination of two essays written by Baldwin in prison: "My Dungeon Shook: Letter to my Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation" and "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region of My Mind." The first letter discusses racial history in America, and the second, Baldwin's experiences with religion. I used Baldwin's writing to learn more about the stereotypes surrounding Black men in American society.

Bates, Daisy. Transcript interview. Conducted by Elizabeth Jacoway, 11 Oct. 1976.

This interview of Daisy Bates provided an inside look on the lives of the Little Rock Nine, talking about their individual struggles, daily routine, and how it affected Daisy and the students for years to come. This was particularly helpful in the section on the Civil

Rights Movement and Afro-American Literature, providing a new perspective on the topic.

Bates, Daisy, and Eleanor Roosevelt. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*. U of Arkansas P, 1962.

This autobiography on the events of Little Rock provided helpful quotes, especially the introduction done by Eleanor Roosevelt. Roosevelt's thoughts on Bates' writing showed how literature really does transcend across racial barriers, even in a time such as that one.

Cleaver, Eldridge, and Maxwell Geismar. *Soul on Ice*. McGraw-Hill, 1968.

Soul on Ice is Elridge Cleaver's letters and essays from prison. It talks about his experiences in prison and race relations. Though controversial, I found the book really interesting, and I learned a lot about the harbored resentment towards white people from Cleaver's writing.

Giovanni, Nikki. "Biography." *The Poetry Foundation*, 2020, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/161883/biography-65a930709ccc5 . Accessed 28 Dec. 2025.

This was a piece that I encountered in my research, a poem by Nikki Giovanni discussing growing a legacy that goes far beyond fame. I used it to familiarize myself with the style and feel of Afro-American poetry and make comparisons to other poets like Gorman and Angelou.

Giovanni, Nikki. "BLK History Month." *The Poetry Foundation*, 2002, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/90179/blk-history-month . Accessed 28 Dec. 2025.

This was a piece that I encountered in my research, a poem by Nikki Giovanni discussing the purpose of Black History Month in encouraging youth. I used it to familiarize myself

with the style and feel of Afro-American poetry, make comparisons to other poets like Gorman and Angelou, and analyze the effect of Black History Month.

Greene, Brenda M., Dr. Interview. Conducted by Carol Jenkins, 25 Jan. 2023.

This is an interview of Brenda Greene, an author, scholar, and activist. Greene spoke often on banned books and minority representation in literature, which was the inspiration behind the entire 5th section: the Long lasting Effects of Afro-American Literature.

Height, Dorothy I., and Maya Angelou. *Open Wide the Freedom Gates : a Memoir*. PublicAffairs, 2003.

This is an autobiography of the incredible life of Dorothy Height, one of the first women involved in leading the Civil Rights Movement. This book is heavily referenced in my paper, as it taught a lot about the values and virtues necessary to pursue justice, and let me into the decision making process of these leaders.

The Hill Staff. "READ: Transcript of Amanda Gorman's Inaugural Poem." *The Hill*, 20 Jan. 2021, thehill.com/homenews/news/535052-read-transcript-of-amanda-gormans-inaugural-poem/ .

This is a transcript of the poem “The Hill we Climb” that Amanda Gorman wrote and read at Joe Biden’s presidential Inauguration. I used sections of this poem as quotes to show the development of Gorman’s writing with the influence of poets like Angelou and Morrison.

King, Martin Luther, and Coretta Scott King. *I Have a Dream : Writings and Speeches That Changed the World*. Edited by James Melvin Washington, HarperSanFrancisco, 1992.

This is a collection of writings by Dr. King. From it, I learned a lot about King's writing style, and compared the themes used to other pieces of literature.

Onwuamaegbu, Natachi. "The importance of representation." *The Stanford Daily*, 25 May 2018, stanforddaily.com/2018/05/25/the-importance-of-representation/ . Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

This is an opinion piece on the importance of minority representation in the media. I used quotes and excerpts from this writing to develop my ideas on the long-lasting effects of literature, specifically the impact it leaves on the lives of youth.

"Reviews and Praise." *Linda Williams Jackson*, lindawilliamsjackson.com/reviews.

This is a section of Linda Williams Jackson's website dedicated to reviews and accolades given to her books. Jackson is the author of Midnight Without a Moon, and I used quotes from this webpage to record and analyze the effects of Jackson's contemporary fiction novel inspired by the real life and death of Emmett Till.

"A Testimony: Open Wide the Freedom Gates by Dorothy Height." *Disrupting Dinner Parties: Feminism for Everyone*, 9 Apr. 2013, disruptingdinnerparties.wordpress.com/2013/04/09/a-testimony-open-wide-the-freedom-gates-by-dorothy-height/ . Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

This is a blog written about the effect of Dorothy Height's *Open Wide the Freedom Gates* on a young person's life. I used this personal perspective to understand how deeply Dorothy Height impacted the lives of American youth, even those in our modern day world.

Secondary Sources

Barber, Zacharie. "Justice, Southern Style: The Kidnap and Murder of Mack Charles Parker." *Texas Woman's University*, twu.edu/media/documents/history-government/Justice-Southern-Style-Ibid.-Volume-7-Spring-2014.pdf .

This is an in depth look at the Mack Charles Parker case, piecing together elements of the case using a varied set of sources, but it can be noticed that the primary source used was *Blood Justice*, by Howard Smead. This told me a lot regarding the importance of that book for understanding the lesser-known details of the case and making the injustice that went on known to the public.

Brisco, Elise. "Amanda Gorman tells Oprah about her connection to Maya Angelou: 'It was an amazing discovery.'" *USA Today*, 6 Mar. 2021, www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/celebrities/2021/03/26/amanda-gorman-oprah-interview-cites-angelou-morrison-inspiration/6998957002/ . Accessed 3 Feb. 2026.

[21] This is an article regarding an interview with Anmanda Gorman, America's youngest inaugural poet. She talks a lot about how Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou were huge influences on her, teaching Gorman to love herself and her characters. I used this to develop my ideas on how Afro-American literature continues to influence writers of today.

Bunch, Lonnie. "The Little Rock Nine." *National Museum of African American History and Culture*, nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/little-rock-nine . Accessed 15 Jan. 2026.

This article was an overview of the events that happened in Little Rock during the Civil Rights Movement. I used it to further my understanding of the Little Rock Nine and their accomplishments and it served as a helpful introduction to Daisy Bates and her story.

Dalavai, V. R. "Maya Angelou: From Struggle to Strength – A Voice for Liberation." *Granthaalayah Publications and Printers*, www.granthaalayahpublication.org/Arts-Journal/ShodhKosh/article/view/1603/1081 .

This is an article of the influence and impact of Maya Angelou and her writing on the Civil Rights Movement. I used this article often in my section on how authors impacted the movement, and it was very helpful in understanding the effect of Angelou's writing.

"Dr. King's Legacy." *National Civil Rights Museum*, civilrightsmuseum.org/lDr. King's Legacy | National Civil Rights Museumearn/dr-kings-legacy/ . Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

This article is an intro to the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King. I used it to further understand the lives of civil rights leaders, and it was interesting to compare him to female leaders like Dorothy Height.

Effiong, Phillip Uko. "The Civil Rights Movement Represented in Literature." *EBSCO*, 2023, www.ebsco.com/research-starters/literature-and-writing/civil-rights-movement-represented-literature . Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

This article discussed how the events of the Civil Rights Movement translated into literature, both fictional and historical. It was my inspiration behind the section The Civil Rights Movement and Afro-American Literature, and led to me researching a lot of additional topics like the Little Rock Nine and Mack Charles Parker.

Guzzanti, Flor. "Maya Angelou: Legacy Beyond Poetry." *Rock and Art*, 17 Apr. 2024, www.rockandart.org/maya-angelou-legacy-beyond-poetry/ . Accessed 30 Dec. 2025.

This article talks about Maya Angelou's childhood and early life, and its impact upon her and her writing. This taught me a lot about Angelou, specifically her motives for writing, so that I could dive further into her goals for writing in consequent articles.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd. "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." *National Humanities Center*, nationalhumanitiescenter.org/ows/seminars/tcentury/movinglr/longcivilrights.pdf Accessed 30 Dec. 2025.

This article discussed the political uses of literature in the Civil Rights Movement, discussing its relevance as a peaceful weapon and means of activating a non-violent revolt. I learned from this article the purpose behind creating representative and historical literature.

"The Impact of Black Authors and Their Stories on Young Readers." *Lead to Read*, 21 Feb. 2023, leadtoreadkc.org/the-impact-of-black-authors-and-their-stories-on-young-readers/ . Accessed 30 Dec. 2025.

This article provides a brief overview of the impact of Afro-American literature and minority representation on youth. It opened up a whole new venue of research for me, and was additional inspiration for my section on the long lasting effects of Afro-American literature.

"James Baldwin." *National Museum of African American History and Culture*, nmaahc.si.edu/james-baldwin. Accessed 3 Jan. 2026.

This article is an overview on renowned author James Baldwin. It discusses his beginning in writing, his development as an author, and his effect on modern society. It was particularly helpful in the section How Authors Impacted the Civil Rights Movement, and gave me an added perspective when analyzing his writing.

Jones, Claire. "An Intersectional Feminist Perspective of Emmett Till in Young Adult Literature." *East Tennessee State University*, May 2018, dc.etsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4844&context=etd .

This article is a deep dive into the effect of Emmett Till on modern literature, specifically in the novels *The Hunger Games, Midnight Without a Moon,* and *A Wreath for Emmett Till.* In a particular section of my paper, I chose to focus on the second title, so this was an invaluable source on the effects of *Midnight Without a Moon.*

Legard, Lauren. "Civil Rights Legend Tells Her Story." *Roll Call*, 23 Feb. 2004, rollcall.com/2004/02/23/civil-rights-legend-tells-her-story/ . Accessed 10 Jan. 2026.

This article delved into the publication process of Dorothy Height's memoir, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates*. It includes quotes from Height herself and other figures involved in the publishing process. With those quotes and insightful commentary, this was an invaluable source on the value of storytelling in the modern world.

"The Long Shadow of Little Rock." *University of Arkansas Press*, www.uapress.com/product/the-long-shadow-of-little-rock/ .

This webpage on the publication of *The Long Shadow of Little Rock* provided quotes about the book from many well-known figures. In my paper, I chose to use a quote from here said by Eleanor Roosevelt.

Mambrol, Nasrullah. "Literary Responses to the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Movement." *Literariness*, 28 Apr. 2025, literariness.org/2025/04/28/literary-responses-to-the-civil-rights-movement-and-black-power-movement/ . Accessed 3 Jan. 2026.

This is an article on how certain events during the Civil Rights Movement impacted that period's literature. It provided inspiration and led me to research the murders of Emmett Till and Mack Charles Parker, additionally focusing on the events at Little Rock as well. It was the main inspiration for the section The Civil Rights Movement and Afro American Literature.

"Midnight Without a Moon." *Kirkus Reviews*, 3 Jan. 2017, www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/linda-williams-jackson/midnight-without-a-moon/ .

This is a webpage documenting Kirkus Reviews' thoughts on *Midnight Without a Moon* by Linda Williams Jackson. I used the text as a reference to literature about and concerning Emmett Till, so this set of thoughts and reviews helped me to analyze the impact of both Emmett Till himself and this novel.

Mustafa, Faiza Farhat Mohammad. "Afro-American Literature And The Civil Rights Movement: A Symbiotic Relationship." *International Journal of Current Science*, 3 July 2024, rjpn.org/ijcspub/papers/IJCSP24C1024.pdf . Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

This piece discusses the relationship between the Civil Rights Movement and Afro-American literature, touching upon certain writings and authors that inspired a change in society. It talks about literature as not just a method of storytelling, but a

political weapon and a tool to gain rights in America. It was very helpful in the development of my conclusion, and was able to give additional perspective all over my paper.

Raines, Howell. My Soul Is Rested : Movement Days in the Deep South. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2024.

This book contains a set of interviews conducted by journalist Howell Raines during the Civil Rights Movement. I used it to hear and understand multiple different perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement, many of them from leaders themselves like Rosa Parks and James Farmer.

Spurgeon, Charles Haddon. "The Valley of the Shadow of Death." *The Spurgeon Center*, 12 Aug. 1880, www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-valley-of-the-shadow-of-death/#flipbook/ . Accessed 28 Dec. 2025.

I used this source to understand a reference made in *Soul on Ice* by Elridge Cleaver. It provided a lot of clarity on a particular phrase used by Cleaver and helped me to understand that section of the book better.

Staff Report. "FBI Re-opens Mack Charles Parker Lynching." *Picayune Item*, 10 May 2009, picayuneitem.com/2009/05/fbi-re-opens-mack-charles-parker-lynching.

This article was an overview of the details of the Mack Charles Parker case. It gave me a closer look at the details and injustices that went on in that time period, and it additionally discussed the relevance of Howard Smead's *Blood Justice* in understanding the nuances of a very complicated case. For that reason, it was very helpful in my paper, particularly in the section The Civil Rights Movement and Afro-American Literature.

Street, Joe. "Liberation Culture: African American culture as a political weapon in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement." *White Rose eTheses*, etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/15092/1/398374.pdf . Accessed 3 Jan. 2026.

This thesis paper discussed the political uses of literature in the Civil Rights Movement, discussing its relevance as a peaceful weapon and means of activating a non-violent revolt. I learned from this article the purpose behind creating representative and historical literature.

"Summary of Dr. Smead's Blood Justice." *IPL*, www.ipl.org/essay/Summary-Of-Dr-Smeads-Blood-Justice-A987DF612EF2B294 .

As I wasn't able to read a copy of *Blood Justice,* this summary came in handy when trying to understand the complexities of the case.

"Apr. 25, 1959: White Mob Murders Mack Charles Parker in Mississippi." Calendar.Eji.Org, calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/apr/25 . Accessed 19 Feb. 2026.

This article was an overview of the details of the Mack Charles Parker case. It gave me a closer look at the details and injustices that went on in that time period, and it additionally discussed the relevance of Howard Smead's *Blood Justice* in understanding the nuances of a very complicated case. For that reason, it was very helpful in my paper, particularly in the section The Civil Rights Movement and Afro-American Literature.

Williams, Rashanda. "Civil Rights History Tour in Sixth Grade." *Shorecrest*, 8 Feb. 2021, www.shorecrest.org/news/2021-02-18/civil-rights-history-tour-in-sixth-grade .

This article talks about *Midnight Without a Moon* being added to a sixth-grade curriculum. I used it as a source to analyze the importance of learning about important

historical topics like Emmett Till in the classroom. It was also an added perspective on the importance of *Midnight Without a Moon.*

Windsor, Malik. "The Importance of Black Literature." *Center for Black Literature*, 5 Dec. 2022, centerforblackliterature.org/the-importance-of-black-literature/ . Accessed 30 Dec. 2025. This is an article on the importance of Black literature. It argues that Black literature fosters community, understanding, and fights stereotypes. This helped me develop my conclusion, and the sections on themes and long lasting effects of Afro-American literature.